

STATE OF MICHIGAN
COURT OF APPEALS

In the Matter of DOMINIC FORD, JR., Minor.

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES, f/k/a
FAMILY INDEPENDENCE AGENCY,

UNPUBLISHED
January 31, 2006

Petitioner-Appellee,

v

JESSICA FORD and DOMINIC FORD, SR.,

Respondents-Appellants.

No. 264271
Sanilac Circuit Court
Family Division
LC No. 01-033807-NA

Before: Meter, P.J., Whitbeck, C.J., and Schuette, J.

MEMORANDUM.

Respondents Jessica Ford and Dominic Ford, Sr. (the Fords) appeal as of right from the trial court order terminating their parental rights to the minor child.¹ We affirm. We decide this appeal without oral argument.²

Once there is clear and convincing evidence of at least one statutory ground for termination, the trial court “must issue an order terminating parental rights unless there exists clear evidence, on the whole record, that termination is not in the child’s best interests.”³

Our review of the whole record shows that Dominic Ford, Sr. had a very unstable employment history. During the pendency of this action, he quit two jobs, despite knowing the adverse effect this would have on the family’s finances and his chances of being reunited with the child. Although he verified that he was currently employed at the time of the termination trial, he had held that job for less than a month. Jessica Ford’s employment history was more

¹ MCL 712A.19b(3)(c)(i) (authorizing termination when adjudicating conditions continue to exist); MCL 712A.19b(3)(c)(m) (authorizing termination when parental rights to another child were voluntarily terminated).

² MCR 7.214(E).

³ MCL 712A.19b(5); *In re Trejo*, 462 Mich 341, 354; 612 NW2d 407 (2000).

consistent, but the family's finances remained very unstable. In the recent past, they had been evicted twice, were in arrears on the rent for their current home, their vehicle had been uninsured for a period of time, their electric bill could not be put into their name until a past due electric bill was paid so their current usage of electricity was "unauthorized," and they had numerous other past due obligations. We conclude that this instability was contrary to the child's best interests.⁴

In addition, the Fords did not demonstrate a strong commitment to doing the work necessary to be reunited with the child. The trial court noted that one of the respondents apparently did not start attending Narcotics Anonymous meetings until January 2005 and that Dominic Ford, Sr. must not have begun his parenting class until February 2005, despite the fact that the child had entered relative care approximately eight months earlier. Finally, despite the Fords' claim that the child was bonded with, and loved them, the evidence showed that the child's feelings towards them were affectionate but not strongly attached. The Fords' claim that the child expressed a desire for reunification is suspect given the evidence that the child displayed no separation anxiety when the visitations were finished. The trial court properly found that the minor child needed permanence and stability. Because of the Fords' unstable lives, lack of commitment to the child, and the child's lack of a strong bond with the Fords, we conclude that the trial court did not clearly err⁵ in its best interests determination.

We affirm.

/s/ Patrick M. Meter
/s/ William C. Whitbeck
/s/ Bill Schuette

⁴ See *In re Dahms*, 187 Mich App 644, 647-648; 468 NW2d 315 (1991).

⁵ *Trejo, supra* at 356-357.